

ANYTHING GOES



Alfred De La Houssaye

Bubble bath bottles, beer cans, and Batman—it doesn't have to be expensive

By Fred Ferretti

It isn't difficult at all to gather a collection of period Chippendales, French Impressionists, Meissen figurines, or Ming porcelains. Not at all. All you need is a modicum of taste, perhaps a personal curator, a trustworthy dealer, and a virtually limitless supply of cash.

But to know which strand of barbed wire to buy (a common double strand of Glidden, knotted of course, or a piece of Reynolds Necktie guaranteed to have come from a fence on the King Ranch—now *that* takes devotion. To know that Number 283 of the bubble-gum series "Horrors of War" vintage 1938, is



Alfred De La Houssaye

worth a cool \$50, whereas most others in the set go for a mere \$1.50 to \$5, is to have a true love of acquisition, a love that transcends something as crass as money. Do you know that Elvis Presley's most sought-after 45 rpm record is "Tutti Frutti"? Or that the Paul McCartney bubble-bath bottle is worth more than the Ringo Starr bubble-bath bottle?

A Passion To Possess

This is the sort of arcane—some might call it trivial—information that is of infinite importance in the world of collectibles. It is a world that pays healthy prices for vintage Watergate Hotel stationery, for videotape cassettes of recent television commercials,

Fred Ferretti is a reporter for The New York Times.



Politicos notwithstanding, these buttons tell us who won the heart and got the votes of this collector.

Alfred De La Houssaye

MAKING A

Showing off your collection with style

By Carol Wheeler



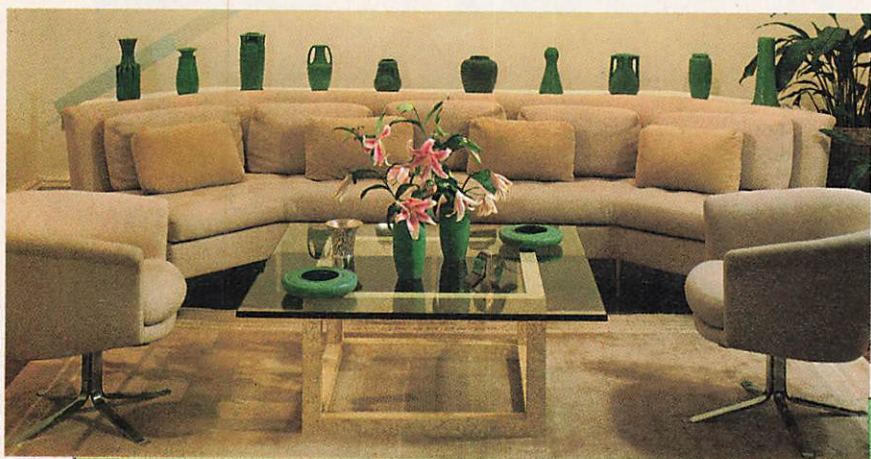
Frank Kelleoggy

The 1850s brownstone that belongs to Robert Bishop, director of New York's Museum of American Folk Art, is filled joyously with contemporary primitive paintings, quilts, and Shaker furniture. This corner shows to good effect how stunning a wall can look with

paintings hung closely in profusion, almost like a jigsaw puzzle. Despite the brick wall and the eye-catching pillows, the fine furniture and the colorful accessories, the collection of paintings holds its own and fascinates the viewer.



Chris Callas



Lined up on the horizontal behind a room's major piece of furniture, a small but special collection is given the dramatic prominence it deserves. Here, the pottery is silhouetted on a shelf of contrasting color against a

monochromatic mural for maximum effect. Confining upholstered furniture to solid color fabrics helps make large pieces recede and gives the small, precious details of a collection a chance to emerge.

You've just returned from Tonga: Should you nail the tapa cloth to the wall? You've combed the beaches for seashells. Are they worth displaying? No native bazaar is foreign to you, but should your living room look like one? When your eye lights on something you love—Fabergé eggs, chocolate bunnies, Ming porcelain, quilts—you snap it up. You've ferreted out some fantastic bargains and you're the owner of some absolutely beautiful possessions. What now? Somehow shoe boxes in the closet don't seem the right place for all these goodies. And dotting them about the house makes no statement except "Dust Me."

Carol Wheeler is a freelance writer who lives in New York.

DISPLAY



Collectors Marilyn and Ivan Karp are lucky enough to have nineteen-foot ceilings—a big advantage when searching for display space. Such a long-distance view is ideal for the strong and simple design of these nineteenth-century stoneware vessels, as it would be for baskets.

Breakage, except perhaps in the event of an earthquake, is completely eliminated. It would be cruelly tantalizing, though, to display anything tactile or with moving parts in such out-of-the-way quarters (unless there are small children around).



Ezra Stoller © ESTO

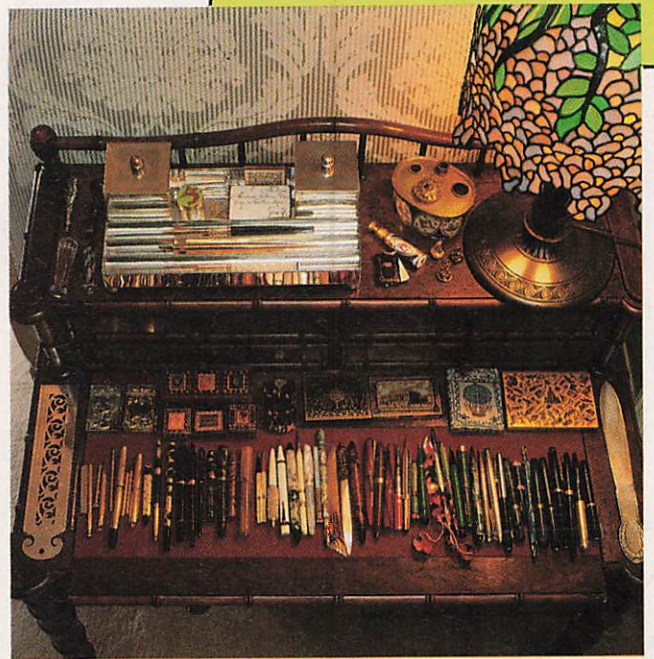
Architect Philip Johnson collects on the grand scale. What to do with his many large paintings and graphics when they simply can't be displayed all at once? Mr. Johnson built an underground art gallery at the site of his famous Connecticut glass house and equipped it with ceiling tracks and concealed storage, a system originally designed for museums. When he wants to see a particular work of art (or even several at once), the walls open and the painting moves into view. While few collectors will consider such a lavish arrangement, it can be the inspiration for a more modest exhibit.

Sonotubes, which are made of heavyweight industrial-use cardboard, are transformed into stunning modern display columns in this room. With lighting built into the top of each column and open glass shelves above and closed storage below, they act as distinctive *étagères* for a collection in a contemporary room. Grouping three such display pieces together makes good use of the available space and unifies a collection of varied objects.



Wolfgang Hoyt/ESTO

In this case, one collectible serves as the showcase for dozens of others. The *faux* bamboo desk would be a prized addition to anyone's Victoriana, while the letter openers, writing implements, and boxes make three or four collections, all conveniently and temptingly displayed within a remarkably small area. Small, elegant artifacts of daily life like these are especially effective when they can be picked up, examined, touched and, with care, even used.



Chris Callas

Just plain ordinary single items are hard to dispose around a room properly. But even if the things you leapt upon with glad cries in the Amish markets didn't cry "collection" at the time, you can turn your purchases and finds into that very thing, to great decorating and furnishing effect.

But how to go about it? Obviously, if you do have a priceless collection of eggs made for the Imperial Russian Court or celadon vases that once belonged to a Chinese emperor, you'll need special display cases that will protect and show off your treasures. Lucite or Plexiglas is an ideal material for this—it's not as heavy as glass, and it is utterly transparent and light.

But it's not necessary to have a world-class collec-

continued on page 86 —>